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INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002034

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV ECON PREL MOPS ASEC

SUBJECT: PRT DIYALA: IRAQI GENERAL CLAIMS CONTROL OF CIVILIAN PROJECTS IN DIYALA

REF: A. BAGHDAD 1363

1B. BAGHDAD 981

1C. BAGHDAD 628

1D. BAGHDAD 64

Classified By: PRT Diyala Leader George White for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Iraq Army (IA) Staff Major General Tariq ab-al-Wahab Jasim Mahdi al-Izzawi, commander of the Diyala Operations Center (DOC), informed PRT and U.S. 1-25 Brigade Officers at a project brief on July 21 that Prime Minister Maliki put him in charge of Diyala Province, and that Diyala Governor Abdul al-Nasir was only a figurehead. MG Tariq also requested the names of contractors working on USG projects so he could arrest them for fraud and poor performance; PRT and Brigade officers declined to provide him with the information. This is the latest and perhaps most alarming in a series of moves which may have been orchestrated to prevent Diyala's elected Sunni Arab majority government from functioning effectively. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) PRT Infrastructure Section Deputy Chief and several other PRT members, along with U.S. Brigade Deputy Commanding Officer and staff, met with MG Tariq on July 21 at his request to brief him on U.S. projects, including Commander's Emergency Relief Program (CERP), Iraqi Commander's Emergency Relief Program (ICERP) and other PRT projects under way in Diyala Province. At this meeting, Tariq announced that Prime Minister Maliki had told him the night of June 20 that he (MG Tariq) was in charge of Diyala Province for security and all other issues, including projects. He also specifically told Diyala Assistant Governor Ghadbon and several mid level provincial government managers in attendance that he was in charge of the province. Tariq additionally claimed that Governor al Nasir was only a figurehead who had achieved nothing. The PRT did not respond directly to his assertions and instead noted that the purpose of the meeting was to brief him, as he had requested, on CERP and ICERP projects.

13. (C) MG Tariq seemed keenly interested in regulations regarding management of funds for CERP and ICERP projects. The Brigade DCO and PRT continued the briefing, clearly explaining key points of CERP and ICERP, and noting that both programs follow U.S. standards and laws and that do not permit Iraqi government officials to handle funds related to the programs. Tariq seemed to pay close attention to this point and asked for clarification several times. The Brigade DCO and PRT outlined current and prospective projects in Diyala. The DCO and PRT also explained that all of these projects had been generated by Diyala government leaders, and that the list had been selected according to the priorities set by the Diyala Governor and his staff.

14. (C) MG Tariq tried very hard to get the PRT representative to brief him directly. DOC and PRT staff kept the briefing military to military with PRT members present as technical experts. Several times during the meeting, Tariq demanded that the PRT provide him a list of the contractors working on PRT projects so that he could arrest them for poor

performance, fraud, or other charges. The PRT declined each time.

¶15. (C) In an apparent effort to coax the PRT to provide contractor names, MG Tariq stated he would allow the PRT free access anywhere in the province. The DCO requested that MG Tariq put this in writing to facilitate PRT travel. Tariq replied he would get back to us. As the meeting concluded he again declared he was in charge and, that is was of no use to consult with the provincial government staff. Tariq said he was the one to help the people and create a safe place for Qwas the one to help the people and create a safe place for the PRT.

¶16. (C) When informed of MG Tariq's statements, Diyala Governor al Nasir told PRT reps on July 22 that MG Tariq had exceeded his authority and that he (the governor) was in charge of reconstruction and other civilian activities.

(Note: The governor seems to want to handle this matter in a low key, non-confrontational manner. End Note).

¶17. (C) At a PRT/Brigade project coordinating meeting on July 23, the DOC's Civil and Military Affairs Officer, Colonel Najim, declared that MG Tariq had sent him to obtain information on all projects in all phases. Before the meeting began, Colonel Najim also pressed the Brigade to provide him the names of all the contractors involved in the projects and the total amount for project funding; again the Brigade DCO declined to provide this information.

COMMENT

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¶18. (C) Tariq's statements indicate a worrying inclination on the part of the military in Diyala to intervene in civilian affairs in the province. Moreover, local Sunni Arab leaders--particularly in the context of recent arrests of Sunni Arab Provincial Council (PC) members and SOI leaders there (refs)--may conclude that MG Tariq is attempting to further undermine the legitimacy of the Sunni-Arab led PC. PRT will report further developments.

¶19. (C) MG Tariq's persistence in seeking the names and addresses of project contractors goes well beyond the information he would need in order to monitor projects, which is not generally the Iraqi military's responsibility. PRT will continue to withhold this information so that it is not used for nefarious purposes, as a previous provincial police director did in 2007-2008. END COMMENT.

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